



**Commission To End Hunger  
Meeting Minutes**

September 26, 2011, 3:00pm – 5:00pm

**Commissioners in Attendance:**

**In Person:**

Joe Antolin (Heartland Alliance)  
John Cheney Egan (DCFS)  
Esperanza Gonzalez (Migrant Workers Council)  
Grace Hou (Asst. Sec., IDHS)  
Juanita Irizarry (Chicago Community Trust)  
Mark Ishaug (AIDS United)  
Barb Karacic (Holy Family Pantry)  
Dan Lesser (Shriver Center)  
Kerry Lofton (IL Dept of Ag)  
Kate Maehr (Greater Chicago Food Depository)  
Nicole Robinson (Kraft)  
Kathy Ryg (Voices for Illinois Children)  
Tracy Smith (Feeding Illinois)  
Terry Solomon (African-American Family Commission)  
Cristal Thomas (Deputy Governor)  
Peter Vina (IL Dept of Health and Family Services)

**Video:**

Marla Goodwin (Jeremiah's Food Pantry)  
Mark Haller (ISBE)  
Gary Tomlin (Knox Co.)

**Phone:**

Rep. Patricia Bellock  
Betsy Creamer (IL Dept of Aging)  
Jay Curtis (IDNR)  
Ahlam Jbara

**Commissioners Not in Attendance:** Mary Ellen Abbott (Illinois Hunger Coalition), Sen. Don Harmon, Rep. Elizabeth Hernandez, Sen. John Millner, Amy Rynell (Heartland Alliance), Kappy Scates

**Other Attendees:** Allison Forrer (Feeding Illinois), Bob Gallo (AARP), Carissa Gomez (Feeding Illinois), Dawn Melchiorre (Voices for Illinois Children), Barbara Rose (Bright Promises Foundation), Doug Schenkelberg (Greater Chicago Food Depository), Tamantha Blair (Department of Human Services), Jan Freeman, Penny Roth (Department of Human Services), Ruby Stringfield (Jeremiah's Food Pantry)

**I. Welcome and Administrative Items - Cristal Thomas, Co-Chair**

Approved meeting minutes from the Commission Meeting. Commissioner Ryg moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Smith seconded the motion, minutes were approved.

Commissioners reviewed revised objectives. Brief discussion on how hunger is being measured and if the term "meals" would be more easily measured based on the Feeding America Map the Meal Gap study. Further discussion led to agreement on using the term hunger as it is more relatable to a broader audience. Commissioner Maehr moved to approve the objectives, Commissioner Ishaug seconded the motion, objectives were approved.

**II. Reflections on the Listening Tour Stops from Commission Participants - Cristal Thomas, Co-Chair**

Co-Chair Thomas reminded the Commission that the purpose of the listening tour stops is to help them better understand how hunger affects communities throughout the state. Commissioners were able to attend five stops to date and participate on debrief calls after the event. There are three stops remaining for the tour. Commissioners were then given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the tour.

Commissioner Ryg shared her appreciation for the blog posts that have helped her and others learn about what has occurred along the tour. She encouraged the promotion of the blog as a resource for those that want to better understand the work of the Commission.

Commissioner Lesser stated that hearing firsthand stories could not be substituted. He participated in the East Saint Louis event and learned of issues including loss of cash assistance as a barrier to combating hunger, lack of access to fresh produce, problems with the local DHS office and high level of poverty. Based on comments from speakers he saw that there is a need to transmit verification documents for SNAP applications electronically. Commissioner Egan added that by having documents online clients can access them. He added that a frustration that is occurring is that each place we visit brings another set of issues and that this issue of hunger is far more complicated than what was expected.

Co-Chair Thomas shared her reflections on the Peoria event. She was moved by how people have stepped up and been innovative to serve their communities, such as the individuals who started summer feeding programs and Walmart backpack programs. She suggested looking at what best practices we can replicate.

Commissioners reflected on three themes Commissioner Egan pointed out: that there is an overwhelming need; that programs, like SNAP, as they exist are not meeting needs; and that community members are responding to specific needs that they see through their own initiatives.

Commissioner Ishaug asked if links to resources were being made by the Commission's presence in these communities. Several indicated that because of the Commission being present there has been increased level of awareness, an opportunity for service providers to connect and for issues to come to light that are affecting specific communities. People have also appreciated the opportunity to share their stories.

- III. **Working Group Reports, Cristal Thomas, Co-Chair:** The three working groups have been meeting for three months. Each group is tasked with better understanding how specific populations are affected by hunger and what their barriers to resources are. Each group presented a report on their progress. Refer to addendums for detailed reports.

**Underserved Populations, Commissioner Marla Goodwin, Chair:** The Commissioners all reflected on the working groups recommendation to better utilize existing municipal buildings and services as distribution points for information and food (ex: post offices, libraries, schools). These are already sites that are frequently used in the community, are intended to be accessible to all and have some inherent perception of trustworthy. The Underserved Populations Group divided into eligible and ineligible sub groups. Commissioner Hou pointed out the ineligible population has no way of accessing federal benefits. This group is relying solely on private philanthropy. We understand we can't change eligibility requirements. Instead, we need to

consider how we better leverage private funds. On the other side is the need to upgrade our abilities to respond to client demand on the state side even with possible budget issues. We really need to look at how we can help DHS and do things better from the inside including: addressing whether office hours can accommodate workers' schedules (i.e. migrant workers) and better educating IDHS staff.

**Vulnerable Adults, Commissioner Dan Lesser, Chair:** The working group has added several members to the working group to better understand specific populations. Members include representatives from AARP, Equip for Equality and Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. One key discussion area that has resulted from their work is how existing relationships with medical professionals could influence how people would access services. Several access issues have arisen including physical, communication, technical and transportation. Individuals facing transition, those leaving prison and foster care, were also pointed out as populations that need to be connected to services.

**Children and Families at Risk, Commissioner Kathy Ryg, Chair:** The working group has observed a need to increase the use of existing programs including: SNAP, school breakfast and lunch, summer food service, and after school and child care meal programs. Commissioner Ryg identified the need for greater coordination of the data collected by state agencies in order to better assess need. Several other challenges were identified including programs that do not serve an entire family, children who are food insecure in communities that are thought to not be in need and access issues. Identified a need to have a convener in communities to help with coordination and take a leadership role in ensuring programs can be accessed. Finally, the working group is planning to visit a high school breakfast program in October. Others are welcome to attend and information will be sent out once a date is finalized.

Commissioner Antolin asked if there is coordination happening with other statewide commissions. He, along with Co-Chair Maehr, will speak with other commissions and investigate how they can support each other in their recommendations.

- IV. **Emerging Recommendations: Identifying Issues and Developing a Framework - Kate Maehr, Co-Chair:** The goal of the Commission is to release a report in March and Co-Chair Maehr emphasized the need for the report to be both understandable and actionable. In order for that to occur a framework needs to be constructed. Three themes have arisen from the working groups' efforts: access/linking, partnerships – enhancing and connecting and strengthening/leveraging opportunities. Each component of the framework should be large enough to encapsulate all the issues and have action behind them. Need to have space for policy recommendations that are specific and also concise enough that we can say a three prong strategy.

Commissioner Solomon recommended applying a matrix based on populations and geographies. Commissioner Robinson recommended three areas: programs, policies and partnerships. Co-Chair Maehr pointed out that recommendations, like those for SNAP, will apply to several populations and so the framework should not be specific to the populations the working groups

have identified. Commissioner Ishaug recommended grouping the recommendations under the headings: better marketing, better utilization, better coordination and bigger investment. He also pointed out that while the Commission may have hundreds of recommendations there needs to be a few game-changers. Commissioner Ryg highly recommends a logic model and an outcomes graph.

Commissioner Karacic recommended that there be a values statement that acknowledges the people that are being served and identifies the values of our goals.

Commissioner Hou added that DHS wants to actively contribute to the recommendation process. DHS can quickly recognize the low hanging fruit but also will need additional support to realize larger goals for their organization.

Commissioner Robinson suggested that a filter is created for what becomes a recommendation based on the barriers to realizing it.

The Commission concluded that the working group chairs should meet with Steering Committee to continue putting together the framework, values statement and filters; and then share it with the entire Commission and working groups.

**V. Next Steps - Kate Maehr, Co-Chair**

1. Convene a cross-commission meeting: what are common issues and opportunities to collaborate. Commissioner Antolin, Co-Chair Maehr and Feeding Illinois staff will coordinate.
2. Distribute information on the school breakfast visit opportunity. Feeding Illinois will send out details.
3. The report framework needs additional work, including the drafting of a values statement, filters and language for identifying those served by the recommendations. The Steering Committee and working group chairs will work on drafting these.
4. Working groups will continue to meet.

**The next Commission meeting will be January 20, 2012**